
Public Scoping Notice Environmental Assessment

Fort Mason Center Continuing Program and Long-Term Lease

The National Park Service (NPS) is soliciting public comment on the scope of an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Section 106 Consultation that will evaluate the potential impacts of a long-term lease between NPS and the Fort Mason Foundation (FMF) for the continuing operation of Fort Mason Center. A long-term lease of up to 60-years is proposed, with additional responsibilities for management of the Fort Mason Center to be assumed by the Fort Mason Foundation. Public comments on the scope of the EA, including issues and alternatives that should be considered, are welcome until April 16, 2003.

The project will be presented at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area's public meeting on March 18, 2003. The meeting will be held at Building 201 Fort Mason in San Francisco and will begin at 7:00 p.m.; however, please note that several projects will be presented at the meeting and the exact time is not established. Directions to the meeting can be obtained by calling (415) 561-4700 or by going to the park website at <http://www.nps.gov/goga/maps/pdf/fomamap.pdf>. Additional information about the project is available by contacting Jonathan Gervais at (415) 561-4841.

Interested individuals, organizations and agencies should send written comments to:

Superintendent
Golden Gate National Recreation Area
Attn: Fort Mason Center Scoping (Gervais)
Building 201 Fort Mason
San Francisco, CA 94123

Fax comments to (415) 561-4854.

E-mail comments will not be accepted.

BACKGROUND

Located on the San Francisco waterfront between Fisherman's Wharf and the Golden Gate Bridge, Fort Mason is a historically significant assemblage of piers and waterfront facilities used by the Army to ship personnel and supplies throughout the Pacific. The Army relinquished Fort Mason in 1963, it was incorporated into the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) in

1972, and Fort Mason was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1985. The Fort Mason Foundation, formed in 1976, operates the facilities at the Fort Mason Center pursuant to a cooperative agreement with the NPS.

The FMF has operated Fort Mason for the benefit of the people of the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond for the past 25 years. The mission of the FMF is to, "create and preserve a cultural, educational and recreational center which reflects the unique history, talents and interests of the people of the Bay Area, in partnership with the National Park Service." The Fort Mason Center has become a national model for the conversion of military facilities to peacetime use. Forty resident nonprofit organizations provide a broad range of activities for all interests, from the performing and visual arts to environmental concerns and wilderness adventures. Four museums present exhibitions, lectures, classes, and family workshops and five theaters present national and international productions offering a variety of dramatic, comedic, dance, and musical performances. The operation of the Fort Mason Center has been consistent with the GGNRA's 1980 General Management Plan.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The GGNRA is proposing to enter into an up to 60-year lease agreement for the continuing use of Fort Mason by the Fort Mason Foundation. The proposed lease is structured to assure the preservation of the landmark and the continuation and expansion of programs that are consistent with the GGNRA's General Management Plan. The lease will include changes to the operation of the Fort Mason Center. In particular, the parking lot will be controlled by the Fort Mason Foundation who may, during the lease term, incorporate a parking fee. If, during the lease term, the NPS obtains appropriations it will seismically retrofit and structurally rehabilitate the substructures of Piers 1 and 3. Pier 1, which was assigned to FMF through an amendment to the Cooperative Agreement in 2002, will be included in the lease. If NPS obtains funding and rehabilitates the sub-structure, FMF will renovate the Pier 1 Shed and put it into programmatic use during the lease term. FMF will perform projects as required to maintain, restore and preserve the buildings during the lease term.

Environmental/Historic Preservation Review

The environmental assessment will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9), the 2001 National Park Service (NPS) Management Policies, and the NPS Director's Order No. 12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-Making. Section 106 Consultation under the National Historic Preservation Act (amended) will be conducted concurrently with the assessment process meeting the requirements of the Advisory Council On Historic Preservation's Section 106 Regulations (36 CFR Part 800). This assessment will evaluate the potential environmental effects of the project on the environment, including effects on cultural resources, visitor use and experience, natural resources, and socioeconomic effects. Mitigation measures will be identified to avoid or reduce any adverse environmental effects from this project. The release of a draft EA for public review is scheduled for early summer 2003.

Questions to consider when preparing scoping comments:

- What issues (environmental, socioeconomic, etc.) should be considered in the environmental assessment?
- Would this project affect how you use the Fort Mason Center?
- Are there other alternatives you would like to see considered?